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SUBJECT: BACKGROUND ON ASSASSINATION OF ARCHBISHOP ROMERO

ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ARNULFO ROMERO WAS MURDERED ON 24 MARCH 1980 IN THE CHAPEL OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL IN NORTHERN SAN SALVADOR COLONIA OF MIRAMONTE. HE WAS STRUCK IN THE LEFT SIDE OF THE CHEST BY A SINGLE .22 CALIBER BULLET THAT FRAGMENTED AND LODGED IN HIS LUNG (SOME BELIEVE AN "EXPLOSIVE" BULLET WAS USED). THOUGH INITIAL OVERT REPORTING SAYS A GROUP OF GUNMEN ENTERED THE CHURCH AND OPENED FIRE, LATER REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS SHOWED THE SHOT TO HAVE BEEN FIRED THROUGH THE OPEN DOORS OF THE CHAPEL BY A SINGLE GUNMAN, PROBABLY USING A RIFLE. SOURCES WERE REPORTED BY THE PRESS TO SAY THAT THE WEAPON WAS PROBABLY EQUIPPED WITH A TELESCOPIC SIGHT. THE ASSASSIN IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE BEEN 90-150 FEET FROM THE ARCHBISHOP WHEN THE SHOT WAS FIRED.

CHURCH OFFICIALS SAID THAT THE KILLER APPARENTLY GOT OUT OF A CAR OPPOSITE THE DOORS TO THE CHAPEL, FIRED ONE SHOT AND THEN WAS DRIVEN AWAY BEFORE ANYONE GOT A CLOSE LOOK AT HIM. THE OFFICIALS SAID IT WAS BELIEVED THREE OTHER MEN WERE ALSO IN THE CAR. THE PRESS REPORTED AT THE TIME THAT THE U.S. AMBASSADOR SAID A GOVERNMENT SOURCE INFORMED HIM ABOUT A WEEK BEFORE THE ASSASSINATION THAT "RIGHT-WING CUBAN TERRORISTS" WERE OPERATING IN EL SALVADOR. THE SOURCE IMPLIED THAT THE ASSASSIN MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OF THESE CUBANS.

Approved for Release

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A VARIETY OF SOURCES HAVE ACCUSED ROBERTO ((D'AUBUISSON)) OF COMPLICITY IN THE MURDER OF ROMERO. ALTHOUGH THE BULK OF THE REPORTING IS CREDIBLE, THERE IS NOTHING THAT COULD BE CONSTRUED AS HARD PROOF. SEVERAL REPORTS ON THE ROMERO ASSASSINATION CLAIM THAT D'AUBUISSON AND HIS COLLEAGUES HELD MEETINGS IN EARLY 1980 TO PLAN THE KILLING. ACCORDING TO SOME SOURCES, THOSE IN ATTENDANCE WERE ASKED TO DRAW LOTS TO DETERMINE WHO WOULD CARRY OUT THE ACT. SOME SOURCES CLAIM THAT MILITARY PERSONNEL COMPRISED THE HIT SQUAD AND THAT A FORMER MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL GUARD FIRED THE FATAL SHOT.

IN ADDITION TO D'AUBUISSON, SEVERAL OTHER NAMES HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH ROMERO'S MURDER:

A. WALTER ((MUSA)).

IDENTIFIED AS ONE WALTER ANTONIO ((ALVAREZ)). ALVAREZ WORKED AT ALMACENES PACIFICO IN SAN SALVADOR. ALVAREZ APPEARS TO HAVE LIVED IN LA HERMITA SECTION OF APOPA, SAN SALVADOR. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, SEVERAL GUNMEN TOOK ALVAREZ AWAY FROM A SOCCER GAME ON 27 SEPTEMBER 1981, SHOT HIM SEVERAL TIMES AND LEFT HIS BODY ON THE ROAD WHICH LEADS TO MARIONA PRISON

B. CAPTAIN EDUARDO ((AVILA)).

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[REDACTED]

C. LTC. ARISTEDES ((MARQUEZ)), FORMER CHIEF OF INVESTIGATIONS DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL POLICE, [REDACTED]

D. LTC. MARIO DENIS ((MORAN)), NATIONAL GUARD OFFICER, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] HIS CASE WAS DISMISSED FOR LACK OF

E. INSPECTOR MISAEL ((RIVAS)) ROMERO, DETECTIVE SIGIFREDO ((PEREZ)) LINARES, JOSE LUIS ((ALAS)) ROMERO, LUIS ((RODRIGUEZ)), AND FNU ((SANTIN)), SUPPOSED MEMBERS OF [REDACTED] DEATH SQUAD WHICH KILLED ROMERO.

F. LT. FRANCISCO ((AMAYA)), [REDACTED] SUPPOSEDLY PARTICIPATED IN THE PLANNING OF THE ARCHBISHOP'S MURDER.

G. CAPTAIN FNU ((VEGA)) VALENCIA, NATIONAL GUARD, WAS ACCUSED BY DOCTOR HECTOR ((REGALADO)), CHIEF OF ARENA'S PARAMILITARY UNIT, OF BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ASSASSINATION, AND OF USING AN EXPLOSIVE BULLET.

H. REGALADO IS SUSPECTED BY SOME AS BEING A CONSPIRATOR IN THE ASSASSINATION, AND OF MANUFACTURING THE EXPLOSIVE BULLET THAT KILLED ROMERO. SUPPOSEDLY, REGALADO, WHO IS A DENTIST BY PROFESSION, HAD USED HIS DENTIST TOOLS IN THE PAST TO FABRICATE SPECIAL BULLETS FOR OTHER ASSASSINATIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE ARENA PARAMILITARY UNIT.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

** [REDACTED]